

### ASSISTED LIVING CONSUMER CHECKLIST

**Getting started.** Call several assisted living programs and ask the manager or administrator the following questions to help narrow your search. If you don't like the answers to these questions it may save you a visit.

<b><i>WHERE TO BEGIN</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
What is the size of your program? (How many units) How many total tenants can the program serve?			
What types of living units are available?			
If none, do you have a waiting list?			
What is your monthly fee? Do you charge any additional fees for the common areas or are these fees included in the monthly unit cost? Are any such fees refunded if I move?			
Do you require a deposit?			
Does the provider participate in the Medicaid waiver program?			
What services are provided?			
What services are included in the monthly fees?			
What services are extra? Do you provide the services or do you contract with an outside agency to provide services? If so, who?			
Is staff on-site at all times?			

<b><i>WHERE TO BEGIN</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
What level of training do the direct care workers possess? What are the qualifications of the program administrator and what experience do they have?			
Do you have a fulltime nurse? Is the nurse an RN or an LPN?			
Who dispenses medication? What are their qualifications?			
Do you pay referral fees to outside agencies? If so, to whom?			

**Judging Quality.** The monitoring reports of assisted living programs can be accessed by the program or through the Department of Inspections and Appeals. You may find it useful to obtain copies of these reports before you go on your visit. The programs must provide them to you upon your request. To retrieve a previous monitoring report call the Department of Inspections and Appeals at **1-515-281-6325**. You may wish to receive more reports than the most recent (i.e. the last three) to establish a program history.

<b><i>QUALITY INSPECTION</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
How recently was the provider inspected?			
Were any violations found? If so, what were they?			
Have the problems been corrected? Does the administrator have any comment on identified violations?			

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program may also have information about whether the program has received complaints and how those complaints were resolved. You may reach the Ombudsman’s Office by calling: **1-800-532-3213**. The tenant advocate (LTC Ombudsman) is also available to answer questions and to provide consumer information.

**Review Documents.** ALPs are required by law to provide copies of the occupancy agreement upon request. If you do not already have them by the time you visit, be sure to get a copy of the:

<b><i>DOCUMENTS OBTAINED</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Occupancy Agreement			
List of service offered			
List of all costs and fees			
Any other documents you will be asked to sign at admission			

**Costs and Occupancy Agreement.** This is the document that will determine how much you will pay to the Assisted Living Program, what services you will be paying for and other issues related to occupancy. If you have not gotten a copy of the Occupancy Agreement before you visit, make sure you get a copy and during the visit ask any of the following questions that are important to you. In Iowa, tenant landlord law does apply to assisted living programs.

<b><i>OCCUPANCY AGREEMENT</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Is the print large enough to read?			
What services are provided for the basic fee?			
Is there a refund policy in case of transfers, discharges, changes in ownership, or closing?			
When will any refunds be paid?			
What behaviors, conditions, or other circumstances can result in termination of services?			

<b><i>OCCUPANCY AGREEMENT</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
What type of living unit will I have?			
What are the rights of the tenant?			
What is the provider's grievance procedure?			
What is the provider's policy on relocating tenants in the program? If they become Medicaid eligible?			
If I am away from the program for a period of time (visiting family, in a hospital) do any fees stop?			
What are the criteria to hold a unit during an extended absence? Is there a charge?			
How long will you hold a unit for me? (Tenant Landlord Law Applies).			
When, how often, and why can the fees be changed?			
When fees are changed, who is informed, and how?			
How much advanced warning is provided of fee changes?			

**Personal and Health Related Care.** Take into consideration that you may need more care in the future than you need now.. In any event, you will want to ask the questions below.

<b><i>MEETING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
How often will my level of care be reassessed?			
How will the provider meet my current care needs?			
What happens if my needs change (I need more help, become incontinent, become confused)?			
How does the provider tailor schedules for preferences or tenants (like bathing or waking times)?			
How does the provider help tenants maintain their abilities to toilet, dress, & eat?			
Is there a schedule for staff to check on each tenant's whereabouts and well being?			
What resources does the provider have to address difficult behavior?			
Are bedrooms, hallways, doorways, bathrooms, and common areas fully accessible to people with walkers or wheelchairs?			
If rooms are shared, what does the provider do if there are problems between roommates?			
Is there a client counsel?			
How does the program solicit consumer satisfaction?			

**Service Plan.** It is very important that you or your legal representative clearly understand what is involved in your service plan as it specifies precisely what services you will get, when you will get them, and how. Your service plan should include your identified needs, your requests for assistance and your expected outcomes as well as who will provide the services.

<b><i>WRITTEN SERVICE PLAN</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
What professionals/staff will be involved in the development of my written service plan?			
How often is the plan revised?			
How will my family or others I choose be involved?			
What involvement does a confused tenant have?			
What happens if I do not agree with the service plan?			

**Staffing.** Staff must be trained to meet your identified needs at all times. A key indicator of a quality Assisted Living Program is trained and competent staff.

<b><i>Staffing</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
How many staff are there for each shift?			
What are their responsibilities?			
What is the training/certification of the people who care for tenants?			
Is there direct care staff fluent in my native language?			
How often is a RN or LPN onsite?			
Is there special training for staff about dementia and Alzheimer's disease?			
How is staff trained to deal with aggressive individuals?			

<i>Staffing</i>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
How is staff trained to deal with confused individuals who may wander?			
What if I do not like the staff person assigned to me?			
What is the staff turnover rate? How long has the administrator been in this position?			

**Management of Medications.** You may manage your own medications unless your physician’s prescription states otherwise, or you may delegate the program to administer your medication. This should be specified in the occupancy agreement and your service plan as some programs may charge for this service.

<i>MEDICATIONS</i>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
What safeguards are in place to ensure I get the appropriate medications on time and in the correct dosage? How is this documented?			
Who is responsible for having prescriptions filled?			
Who gives out medications?			
If not a nurse, how are staff trained and supervised about medications?			
If I delegate the administration of medication, what is the fee?			
Does the program need to know about my medications if I administer them myself?			
May a family member administer medications?			
Under what conditions would the program insist that I delegate the administration of medications?			

**Transportation.** Assisted Living Programs vary in how accessible transportation may be to tenants.

<b><i>TRANSPORTATION</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Is any transportation provided?			
If so, how often (daily, weekly, evenings, weekends?)			
Is transportation wheelchair accessible?			
To where is transportation provided (grocery stores, shopping malls, medical appointments)?			
Will the provider call and arrange for transportation it does not provide?			
Is transportation available if I want to go to an event by myself or with a friend?			
Are there fees for using the provider's transportation or transportation arranged by the provider?			

**Activities.** Look at a monthly activity schedule to see if the activities appeal to you. Inquire about the following:

<b><i>ACTIVITIES &amp; SOCIALIZING</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
How often are activities in the community scheduled?			
Will staff attend with me?			
Are there protected or enclosed walking areas for tenants?			

<b><i>ACTIVITIES &amp; SOCIALIZING</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Does programming provide opportunities for a variety of interest types and levels of involvement?			
Who develops and supervises recreational activities?			
How often is an activities schedule provided to me and how far in advance is this schedule provided?			
How do tenants have input into the activities offered?			
Is there a pet policy?			
Is there are visitor policy?			

**Meals.** A great way to check out the food offered by the program is to sample a meal during your visit. Questions to ask include the following:

<b><i>DINING</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
What times are meals served?			
What happens if I am late, miss a meal, or decline a meal?			
How will any special dietary needs I have be met?			
When can I have a tray delivered to my room?			
Is there an additional charge for tray service?			
If I do not like a meal, what are the alternatives?			
When are snacks available?			
May I see the printed menu for the past month?			

<b><i>DINING</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
How do you make sure each tenant is taking in adequate nutrition?			
Does a dietician review the menus?			

<b><i>HOUSEKEEPING &amp; LAUNDRY</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
How often will my unit be cleaned?			
Can I choose to clean my own unit?			
How often will my linens be changed?			
Will the provider do my personal laundry?			
Are washing machines & dryers available for me to use at the program?			
If so, is there any cost to use them?			

**Life Safety & Choice.** Assisted living providers emphasize independence and choice. They also have rules and procedures designed to protect tenants from harm. It is important to match your ability with the extent of choices and opportunities offered by a provider, as well as the limitation it will impose upon you.

<b><i>SAFETY &amp; EMERGENCIES</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
What safety measures are in place to protect tenant's personal property from being stolen?			
What safety measures are in place to protect tenants from wandering away?			

<b><i>SAFETY &amp; EMERGENCIES</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Are exit doors alarmed?			
Are the floor coverings made of nonskid material?			
Is there a fire emergency plan? Are the staff trained in the plan and able to articulate the plan?			
What are the safety arrangements for people in wheelchairs or others who need assistance to escape in case of fire or other emergency?			
How often are there fire drills?			
How do tenant's with limited mobility participate in fire drills?			
Are emergency plans publicly displayed?			
What kind of emergencies are staff expected to handle and how are they trained for them?			
Who decides whether to call 911? May I have a copy of any written policies about how that decision is made?			
Will my family or legal representative be notified immediately if 911 is called? If there is a fire or other natural disaster, where will tenants be temporarily located?			

**Self-direction.** Assisted living programs include encouragement of family involvement, tenant self-direction, and tenant participation in decisions that emphasize choice, dignity, privacy, individuality, shared risk, and independence.

<i><b>INDIVIDUAL CHOICE</b></i>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Does the program require a signed statement on negotiated risk?			
What if I want an exception to a policy, e.g., smoking, or eating foods that are not on a prescribed diet?			
Is there a policy on smoking?			
Will the provider require that I participate in any particular activity or program?			

**Involuntary Discharge.** The occupancy agreement must explain the circumstances under which the assisted living program may discharge you. This is referred to as an involuntary transfer. The answers to the following questions will help you clarify an assisted living program’s ability to care for people with health and behavior conditions that can be difficult to manage. It will also help you determine if you have recourse if you are asked to leave. In the event of an involuntary discharge, the tenant advocate is a valuable resource and may be reached at **1-800-532-3213**.

<i><b>INVOLUNTARY TRANSFERS</b></i>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
What are the possible reasons for discharge?			
Is there an internal appeal process?			
What is it?			
How many days notice is given and to whom? Tenant Landlord Law Applies.			
Is there a refund if there is an involuntary discharge?			
May a waiver be obtained to prevent a transfer or discharge? If so, what is the process?			

**Dementia Units.** This section is directed to legal representatives, family members or other interested persons, because it would be unusual for the person who needs a special care unit to be asking these questions.

<b><i>DEMENTIA CARE</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Is there a separate area specifically for people experiencing dementia?			
How do services in the dementia unit differ from services in the rest of the assisted living program?			
What is the difference in staff training?			
What is the staff-to-tenant ratio?			
Is there a special outdoor area for tenants with dementia to use? How is it secured?			
What techniques do you use to ensure that the tenant is getting proper nutrition?			
Do you offer decaffeinated drinks throughout the day?			
Does the calendar of activities look appropriate for the tenant?			
What is the provider's policy on restraints, both chemical and physical?			
How much space is there to walk around on the unit?			
What is the cost difference between special care and regular units?			